Clearly a Great Design



Award winning industrial designer, Nelson Au, was challenged by Seagate Technologies to create a unique look for a new USB pocket hard drive. Offering higher storage capacity, they wanted a recognizable design, to compete successfully in an already crowded market.

Given a physical model of a previous concept, a printed circuit board, and several other components, Au used Cobalt™ 3D modeling software to quickly design several new concepts, taking advantage of the CAD program's outstanding ability to create any shape imaginable.

Au struggled a bit with the initial design. Not only were the client's own ideas visually unappealing, but their team was having difficulty visualizing how Au's ideas would work.

Then Au had a breakthrough. He created an outer enclosure to house the retractable cord, and an inner portion to house the memory and electronic components. Using Cobalt's transparency features, he was able to show that the design and inner workings of the drive would fit and work together perfectly. Says Au,

"Cobalt's ability to make objects transparent, as well as its great rendering capabilities really helped me communicate the design to the client. It helped them realize that the beauty of the design was the ability to see the inner components."

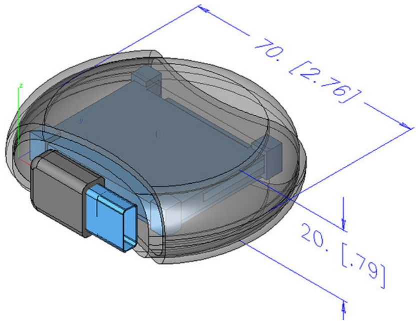
The client approved the design, and the drawings that were so easily done in Cobalt went directly to a rapid prototyping house to create an STL model, validating the touch and feel of this highly tactile design.

Having used Ashlar-Vellum™ CAD and 3D modeling software since 1989, Au loves Cobalt because it is so easy to learn and requires no training. He also likes the compatibility with his Mac. Says Au, "My coworkers use Rhino, Alias, SolidWorks, or Pro/E and then whine a lot about their software. I use Ashlar-Vellum software without all of the aggravation, and can still exchange information with all these applications using Cobalt's built-in CAD file translators."

Au and the Seagate pocket drive won the 2006 Good Design Award for Electronics. Ashlar-Vellum is proud to have designers like Nelson Au as our customers; designers creating leading-edge products that are clearly above the rest.



The Seagate pocket drive designed by Nelson Au using Cobalt CAD and 3D modeling software.



Au loved the way Cobalt presented shaded, dimensional drawings with transparency, allowing the client to visualize the inner workings and verify precise fit of the components.



The Seagate pocket drive with its retractable cord.

Background/Contact
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